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Little pratincole
(*Glareola lactea*)

IUCN: Least Concern, CITES: Not listed IWPA: Scheduled IV, Population Trend: Unknown

Widespread throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. Small bird (16.5-18.5 cm) with sandy grey body, very shallow forked tail, short legs. The tail is white with a black terminal triangle. Gregarious, crepuscular, insectivorous. Its short bill is an adaptation to aerial feeding. Mostly found at river banks, natural wetlands and coastal marshes.

Breeding Interval: Once yearly.

Breeding Season: March to May/February to April.

Nest site/ type: Colonial nester, nests on the sandy river bank, mid-river sandy islands.

Clutch Size: 2 to 3

Major threats: Habitat destruction, habitat loss, hydrologic alterations, nest predation by dogs, disturbance by fishermen and cattles.



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**Great stone-curlew/
Great thick-knee**
(*Esacus recurvirostris*)

IUCN: Near Threatened, CITES: Not listed, IWPA: Scheduled IV, Population Trend: Unknown.

Widespread throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. A large plover (49-54 cm) with large, thick-head, long-legs, heavy upturned yellow and black beak, big yellow eyes and peculiar black and white facial pattern. Crepuscular and nocturnal. Feeds on crabs and mollusks.

Breeding Interval: Once in a year.

Breeding Season: February to June.

Nest site/ type: Nests on exposed sandbank on riverbeds.

Clutch Size: 2

Major threats: Habitat destruction, habitat loss, hydrologic alterations, nest predation by dogs, disturbance by fishermen and cattles.

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VIBRANT GANGA 



breeding
**birds
of
ganga
river**





The Ganga River, our National River, the lifeline of Indian civilization with deep rooted religious and cultural belief, is one of the largest living river systems in the world. The main stem of the river flows through 5 states of India however the entire catchment provides water to 11 states. Apart from nurturing over 500 million Indians, the river basin is important habitat for numerous amphibians, reptiles like turtles, gharial and mugger crocodiles; migrating waterfowls, wetland and wetland associated birds and mammals including Gangetic river dolphins.

Being a megadiverse country, India harbours 1301 species of birds. The Gangetic basin supports 177 species of these birds including wetland, riverine and terrestrial species. Some iconic and globally threatened birds breed along the Ganga River. These species are indicators of healthy river ecosystems, however, are vulnerable to hydrologic alteration, climatic shifts and anthropogenic interference.

National Mission for Clean Ganga - Wildlife Institute of India (NMCG-WII) "Biodiversity Conservation and

Ganga Rejuvenation" Project aims at science-based aquatic species restoration programme. The conservation of these birds of the Ganga River is part of the Ganga rejuvenation programme.

The conservation status of the species are referred here as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendices and Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act (IWPA), 1972 Schedules.



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Black bellied tern

(*Sterna acuticauda*)

IUCN: Endangered, CITES: Not listed, IWPA: Schedule IV, Population Trend: Decreasing

Distributed in major river systems throughout India. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. A small bird (33 cm), adults have orange bill, black cap and nape, dark grey breast and blackish belly and vent. It skims over the surface of water and ground to pick up insects and plunges at an angle into the water to feed on crustaceans, tadpoles and fish.

Breeding Interval: Once in a year.

Breeding Season: February to April.

Nest site/ type: Island nester on sandy beaches of mid-river islands.

Clutch size: 2-3

Major threats: Alteration of breeding habitat, river bank and river island agriculture, sudden release of water from dams, water pollution, nest predation by cats, dogs and corvids.



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Indian sarus crane

(*Antigone antigone*)

IUCN: Vulnerable, CITES: Appendix II, IWPA: Schedule IV, Population Trend: Decreasing

Distributed in Northern and central India. Found in the upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. Largest crane of India (156 cm), with naked red head and upper neck, grey plumage, greenish horny bill, and red legs. Omnivorous and feeds on aquatic plants such as tubers of sedges, invertebrates, grains, small vertebrates and insects.

Breeding Interval: Once in a year.

Breeding Season: June- September.

Nest site/ type: Nests on agricultural land and dry grassland. Nests look like islands as they are built with reeds and grasses which can reach roughly 2 m high above the water surface.

Clutch Size: 2-3

Incubation Period: 28-31 days.

Major threats: Loss and degradation of wetlands, as a result of drainage and conversion to agriculture, ingestion of pesticides.



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Indian skimmer

(*Rynchops albicollis*)

IUCN: Vulnerable, CITES: Not listed, IWPA: Not listed, Population Trend: Decreasing

Distributed in large rivers of western and eastern India, coastal estuaries. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. This tern-like bird (40 cm) has unique bill with much longer lower mandible, deep orange in colour with yellow tip, black and white plumage, black upper body, white underpart, bright red legs. Skims over water surface, feeds on surface-dwelling fish, small crustaceans and insect larvae.

Breeding Interval: Once in a year.

Breeding Season: February-May.

Nest site/ type: Colonial, island nester on sandy beaches of mid-river islands.

Clutch Size: 3-4

Major threats: Alteration and degradation of habitats in rivers and lakes through dams, fishing, sand mining, agriculture, grazing and pollution from agricultural and industrial chemicals. Also there are reports of nest flooding due to water release from dams, predation by corvids, presence of stray and domestic dogs.



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River tern

(*Sterna aurantia*)

IUCN: Near Threatened, CITES: Not listed, IWPA: Schedule IV, Population Trend: Decreasing

Distributed throughout India. Found in the middle and lower stretches of Ganga River. A large bird (38-46 cm) with fluviatile pale grey and white plumage, pointed bright yellow bill, deeply forked swallow tail and short red legs. Predominantly feeds on fishes, small crustaceans and insects.

Breeding Interval: Once in a year.

Breeding Season: March to June.

Nest site/ type: Sand banks, sandy mid-river islands.

Clutch Size: 2-3

Major threats: Alteration and degradation of habitats in rivers and lakes through dams, fishing, sand mining, agriculture, grazing and pollution from agricultural and industrial chemicals, sudden water release from dams, predation by corvids, presence of stray and domestic dogs.



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River lapwing

(*Vanellus duvaucelii*)

IUCN: Near Threatened, CITES: Not listed, IWPA: Schedule IV, Population Trend: Decreasing

Distributed throughout the northern, east and central India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of Ganga River. Small bird (29-32 cm) with black bill, head and occipetal crest, underparts sandy grey-brown; uppertail coverts and tail white, legs and feet reddish black. Primarily feeds on crustaceans, insects and small frogs. Feeds at water's edge.

Breeding Interval: Once in a year.

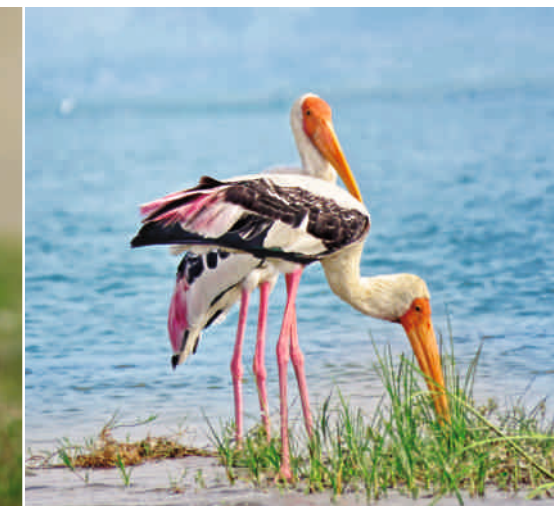
Breeding Season: March-June.

Nest site/ type: Shingle and sand banks of the riverside.

Clutch Size: 2

Incubation Period: 28-30 days.

Major threats: Alteration of river hydrology by dams, habitat degradation due to encroachment and excessive disturbance, incidental disturbance caused by people, livestock and dogs.



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Painted stork

(*Mycteria leucocephala*)

IUCN: Near Threatened, CITES: Not listed, IWPA: Schedule IV, Population Trend: Decreasing

Widespread throughout India. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. Medium size bird (93-100 cm) with pure white body, coverts of the wings are black, the tail is pink, head of the adult is bare and orange or reddish, bill long, yellow-orange, broad at base, long legs, semi-palmated feet. Forages in day, feeds on small fishes, frogs, occasionally snake.

Breeding Interval: Once yearly.

Breeding Season: August to October.

Nest site/ type: Colonial tree nester often with other species.

Clutch Size: 3 to 4

Incubation Period: 30 days.

Major threats: Habitat loss and degradation, pollution, disturbance to breeding colonies like hunting of adults and collection of eggs and nestlings from colonies.